



UNITED STATES
ADVISORY COMMISSION
ON INFORMATION

Washington, D. C. 20547

BEFORE THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE
ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND MOVEMENTS

SYMPOSIUM ON "THE FUTURE OF U. S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY"

Remarks by FRANK STANTON, Chairman

United States Advisory Commission on Information

Washington, D. C. July 22, 1968

Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee. You need not search far to find the assessment of the United States Advisory Commission on Information on "The Importance of Communications in International Relations." Twenty-three times in twenty years members of this Commission have put their names to documents which embodied their view, and their vision, of that subject. It is my privilege to offer for your appraisal the published record of this Commission's activity, and in so doing to convey to you the sentiments of two decades.

Their most recent expression was in the 23d Report, submitted in February of this 20th anniversary year of the information, educational and cultural programs now administered by the United States Information Agency -- the programs over which this Commission is charged to keep watch. That Report offered four general suggestions of how the future should proceed from the past.

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The first involved a change in course. "New Directions," we said, were indicated in both the mission and the organization of United States public affairs programs abroad. Those programs had taken their lead from what we knew about the world in the years immediately following World War II, and reflected both the hopes and the fears of that period. But the world has moved on; faster, in this respect, than have we.

The second involved a change in organization. We began the post-war period with virtually no foreign public affairs program. There is now not one, but several. Parts of the program have devolved to the President, parts to the Secretary of State, parts to the Director of the USIA and parts to various others in the governmental establishment. While, in our view, the overall effort remains too little, what there is is fractionalized. "New Dimensions" are required, said the Commission in its 23d Report. It is time to draw together the reins now leading to our many-bossed overseas public affairs effort.

"New Duties" are indicated. For the most part, USIA has been assigned what we call the "trumpet" function in foreign affairs. It has been an outward effort, proceeding from the notion that if we will but tell the world what we want it to hear, it will be quick to heed. We think USIA should listen, too. Moreover, we think USIA should be listened to, in the governmental councils at home. It should be an influence on policy as well as an instrument of it. It seldom is now. It will never be fully effective in the future unless it is assigned that role.

The nuts and bolts need tinkering, too. "New Emphases" should be put on USIA's approach to its operations. Ours is a far more

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sophisticated world in 1968 than it was in 1948. No longer may we expect the word from Washington to be accepted either intact or in toto by media abroad. The message, said the 23d Report, is better delivered by hand than by handout. The wave of the future must be in greater reliance on personal contact: on an official-to-official basis, an official-to-people basis and a people-to-people basis.

It was the purpose of the Advisory Commission, in preparing the 23d Report, to take "a long step back from the trees and a searching look at the forest." Not everything came into focus. What we saw convinced us, however, that a further study -- one which would go beyond our resources, if not beyond our charter -- ought to be undertaken. We posed 11 questions that might suggest an initial agenda for that research:

"Is the United States Information Agency to be but an agent of American 'propaganda'?"

"Should it be more than an arm of foreign policy?"

"Are information, educational and cultural objectives compatible within one agency?"

"Were they consolidated outside of the Department of State, should that body have Cabinet rank?"

"Or should the reins be drawn together within a restructured Department of State?"

"Does the responsibility of those who create the foreign policy of the United States go beyond its declaration?"

"Should they have charge of its promulgation as well?"

"Should USIA have a hand in information dispersal for government agencies beyond the Department of State?"

"Should it play a role in the influence of policy as well as in its execution?

"Should it help support those private organizations whose overseas activities had been subsidized covertly in the past by the federal government and whose future funding is under study by a committee chaired by the Secretary of State?

"Do we really intend that USIA work toward "mutual understanding"; is it to help us understand them as well as to help them understand us?"

I would return in closing to the point where we began -- to "The Importance of Communications in International Relations." Let me put it this way.

There are four channels through which a nation may conduct its foreign affairs. The first is diplomacy. The second is trade. The third is communication. The fourth is force. Three are complementary, the last is alternative. Indeed, the last alternative. It is indicative of the disordered priorities of our time that 95 percent of our foreign affairs moneys are devoted to the channel that the other 5 percent is dedicated to avoid.* It seems to me an uneven proposition.

There is no business more crucial to this hour than the assignment of priorities for the future. It is, I submit, far more important than the assignment of blame for the past. The subject we discuss today is neither the be-all nor the end-all of that future, but it is worthy of far greater consideration than it has ever been accorded before.

*According to the "The Budget in Brief," published by the Executive Office of the President/Bureau of the Budget, the federal budget for Fiscal Year 1969 allocates \$79.8 billion to national defense, \$4.5 billion to international affairs and finance, including operation of the Department of State, the United States Information Agency, the Peace Corps and the foreign aid program.

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